

**NATURAL RESOURCES CONSERVATION SERVICE
CONSERVATION PRACTICE STANDARD AND SPECIFICATIONS**

WILDLIFE WATERING FACILITY

(no.)

Code 648

DEFINITION

Develop, improve, or modify watering places and systems for wildlife.

PURPOSE

- Provide adequate quality drinking water during critical periods for wildlife.
- Create or expand suitable habitat for wildlife.
- Improve water quality and accessibility for wildlife.

CONDITIONS WHERE PRACTICE APPLIES

In areas where new, additional, or improved watering places are needed to increase the range, distribution, improve the habitat of, or attract wildlife by meeting their water requirements.

Where lack of adequate water has been identified as the limiting habitat component.

CRITERIA

General Criteria Applicable to all Purposes

Because each facility is unique to species, habitat, topography, and climate, watering facilities must be planned and installed according to a plan and adapted to the specific site. Each site is unique and the planner must use individual judgment on the method of construction, size and available water sources, that are necessary to meet the purpose of this

practice.

Methods used will be designed to protect the soil resource from erosion.

Facilities will be protected from livestock damage. See USE EXCLUSION (472).

The facility must provide permanent, accessible, dependable, and suitable quality water during the annual period of lower rainfall.

Wildlife watering facilities shall be spaced one-quarter mile apart or no closer than one-quarter mile to a dependable quality water supply.

The watering facility is to provide a source of water during dry months of normal rainfall patterns. Design shall include appropriate safety features to minimize the hazards of the facility.

Management measures shall be provided to control invasive species and noxious weeds.

Facilities shall be designed and installed in compliance with all state and federal laws.

Disturbed areas shall be vegetated according to a revegetation plan. Use CONSERVATION COVER (327) unless the area is subject to frequent overflows or spillway protection is needed, then CRITICAL AREA PLANTING (342) will be used. Native plant materials will be used whenever possible to achieve the desired purpose.

Embankments and Dugouts

The design of the watering facility will have a surface area of at least 150 square feet and a water depth of at least 3 feet over half of the area. At least one slope must permit wildlife to enter and leave easily (6:1 or flatter slope).

Surface runoff basins with small earth embankments intended to store more than 3 feet of water against the embankment shall be designed according to POND (378) with the exception of size and depth.

Springs and Seeps

The reliability and quantity of its flow will be checked before development of a spring or seep to serve as a wildlife watering facility. Intermittent springs will be developed only if adequate checks show that water is available for the intended periods of use. It is advisable to provide large capacity storage to assure an adequate water supply when the intermittent spring stops flowing.

Springs and seeps will be dug to firm ground or rock to obtain the maximum flow and all sources should be directed to a central collection basin.

Improvements involving intermittent springs and seeps will contain storage of at least a minimum of 50 gallons of water. See SPRING DEVELOPMENT (574) for additional information.

When using tanks or troughs, place ramps, ladders, or floats in the facility to provide a means of escape for birds and small mammals.

CONSIDERATIONS

Consider the effects on target species and the ecosystem by concentrating grazing, predation, hunting, etc.

Consider the accessibility of the site for installation and maintenance.

Consider any effects upon natural springs/wetlands and associated unique flora and fauna.

This practice may be used to promote the conservation of declining species, including threatened and endangered species.

Consider the aesthetics of the installation.

Consider use of these areas by reptiles and amphibians. Stacked logs and/or rock piles may be located near the water's edge to provide critical habitat for local reptile and amphibian species.

PLANS AND SPECIFICATIONS

Plans and specifications for this practice shall be prepared for each site. Plans and specifications shall be recorded using approved specification sheets, job sheets, technical notes, or narrative documentation in the conservation plan or other acceptable documentation to describe the requirements for applying the practice to achieve its intended use.

OPERATION AND MAINTENANCE

The purpose of operation, maintenance, and management is to insure that the practice functions as intended for the life of the practice.

Facilities shall be checked annually to insure proper function. Repair and maintain as needed.

Inspect the area adjacent to the facility to make sure the area is well protected with desirable vegetation and not subject to erosion or sediment deposition. Correct as needed.

Facilities not designed to withstand or operate during freezing weather will be winterized prior to winter conditions.